

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, SCUL
SUBJECT: ARMENIAN DECLARED OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF REPUBLIC

REF: MOSCOW 4916

1. THE NEW ARMENIAN CONSTITUTION, AS PUBLISHED APRIL 15 IN "KOMMUNIST", PRINCIPAL RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER OF THE REPUBLIC, DECLARES IN ARTICLE 72 THAT ARMENIAN IS THE STATE LANGUAGE OF THE REPUBLIC. THREE FURTHER PARAGRAPHS DUPLICATE THE WORDING IN THE GEORGIAN CONSTITUTION AND IN THE DRAFT ARMENIAN CONSTITUTION TO THE EFFECT THAT THE REPUBLIC CONCERNS ITSELF WITH THE ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE AND ENSURES ITS USE IN STATE AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS, IN CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS; FURTHER, THAT THERE IS FREE USE OF RUSSIAN AND OTHER LANGUAGES USED BY THE POPULATION; AND FINALLY, THAT NO LIMITATION IN THE USE OF ANY OF THESE LANGUAGES IS TO BE PERMITTED.

2. THIS SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE FROM THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION IS PASSED OVER WITHOUT COMMENT IN THE SPEECH BY FIRST SECRETARY
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TARY DEMIRCHYAN AND RESUMES OF SPEECHES BY DEPUTIES TO THE SPECIAL SUPREME SOVIET SESSION, ALL PUBLISHED IN THE SAME ISSUE OF "KOMMUNIST." EVEN A SEPARATE "REPORT BY COMRADE K.S. DEMIRCHYAN ON THE RESULTS OF THE WORK OF THE EDITORIAL COMMISSION", WHICH DEALS SPECIFICALLY WITH CHANGES INTRODUCED TO THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION, FAILS TO MENTION ARTICLE 72.

3. INSTEAD, EMPHASIS IS LAID ON AN ADDITION TO ARTICLE 70, WHICH LISTS THE PREROGATIVES AND POWERS OF THE HIGHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES OF THE REPUBLIC. FOUR DEPUTIES ARE CITED AS PROPOSING AN ADDITION TO THESE POWERS, NAMELY STATE CONTROL OVER THE PRESERVATION AND USE OF "MONUMENTS OF HISTORY AND CULTURE." DEMIRCHYAN IS QUOTED AS STATING THAT: "THE MANY CENTURIES OF HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE HAVE LEFT US A RICH AND VALUABLE HERITAGE."

4. THOUGH THERE IS NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO THE CHANGE IN ARTICLE 72, THE SPEECH BY DEPUTY V.A. PETROSYAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE WRITERS' UNION, CALLS FOR IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AND IMPROVING SOVIET ARMENIAN LITERATURE ITSELF: "IN CREATING POEMS, NOVELS AND PLAYS WORTHY OF THE HIGH ARTISTIC CRITERIA OF THE DAY, IN THE SOUNDS OF THE PURE AND BEAUTIFUL ARMENIAN LANGUAGE FROM THE STAGE AND SCREEN."

5. COMMENT: ARMENIAN THUS JOINS GEORGIAN AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE REPUBLICS, THEREBY CONTINUING THE DE JURE SITUATION EXISTING SINCE THE EARLIER CONSTITUTIONS. AZERBAIDZHANI (OR AZERI) WAS THE ONLY OTHER MINORITY LANGUAGE GIVEN SUCH STATUS IN THE 1936/37 CONSTITUTIONS. THE AZERBAIDZHANI DRAFT CONSTITUTION, AS PUBLISHED IN MARCH, LACKED THE CLAUSE CALLING FOR STATE CONCERN FOR THE LOCAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LANGUAGE WHICH WAS PRESENT IN THE GEORGIAN AND ARMENIAN DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS, SO IT WOULD BE EVEN MORE OF A CHANGE SHOULD SUCH AN ADDITION BE MADE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DISCREPANCY IN THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE IN THE THREE TRANS-CAUCASIAN REPUBLICS WILL BE QUITE STRIKING IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A CHANGE. WE SHOULD BE RECEIVING THE FINAL TEXT OF THE AZERBAIDZHANI SSR CONSTITUTION WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. TOON

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